

Appl. No. 10/603,525
Preliminary Amdt. dated January 6, 2005

Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-63 (Cancelled)

64. (New) A process for cultivating *Morchella sclerotia* using mycelium and a tree seedling, the process comprising the steps of:

inoculating a root system of the tree seedling with the mycelium to produce an inoculated tree seedling;

distressing a shoot system of the inoculated tree seedling, said step of distressing the shoot system causing at least a portion of the root system to dye and stimulating the formation of sclerotia from the mycelium in the dying root system; and

harvesting the sclerotia by removing the sclerotia prior to the formation of an ascocarp.

65. (New) The process of claim 64 further comprising the step of cultivating the mycelium by the steps of:

introducing spores onto a culture medium; and

incubating the spores until the spores produce the mycelium.

66. (New) The process of claim 65 wherein said step of inoculating the root system with the mycelium comprises:

introducing the root system of the tree seedling into the culture medium; and

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incubating the culture medium until the mycelium has inoculated the root system.

67. (New) The process of claim 65 wherein said step of inoculating the root system with the mycelium comprises:

- adding a planting medium on top of the culture medium;
- placing at least one tree seed on top of the planting medium;
- germinating the tree seed into the tree seedling; and
- growing the tree seedling until the root system is inoculated with the mycelium.

68. (New) The process of claim 64 further comprising the step of cultivating the mycelium by the steps of:

- introducing a plurality of spores into a container of culture medium;
- placing the container of culture medium in a planting medium;
- covering the culture medium and the planting medium with a germinating medium; and
- incubating the spores until the spores produce the mycelium.

69. (New) The process of claim 68 wherein said step of inoculating the root system with the mycelium comprises:

- placing at least one tree seed in the germinating medium;
- germinating the tree seed into the tree seedling; and
- growing the tree seedling until the root system is inoculated with the mycelium.

70. (New) The process of claim 64 wherein said step of inoculating the root system comprises:

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introducing spores onto a culture medium;
introducing a tree seed into a planting medium;
simultaneously incubating the spores and the tree seed until the spores produce the mycelium and the tree seed germinates into the tree seedling;
placing the tree seedling on the culture medium; and
incubating the culture medium until the mycelium has inoculated the root system.

71. (New) The process of claim 64 wherein said step of inoculating the root system with the mycelium comprises injecting the mycelium into the tree seedling.

72. (New) The process of claim 64 wherein said step of inoculating the root system with the mycelium comprises grafting a portion of an inoculated tree seedling onto the tree seedling.

73. (New) The process of claim 64 wherein said step of inoculating the root system with the mycelium comprises growing the tree seedling in close proximity to an inoculated tree.

74. (New) The process of claim 64 further comprising the step of growing the inoculated tree seedling for at least one growing season.

75. (New) The process of claim 64 wherein said step of distressing a shoot system comprises severing the shoot system from the root system.

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76. (New) The process of claim 64 wherein said step of distressing a shoot system comprises defoliating the tree.

77. (New) The process of claim 64 wherein the shoot system of the tree seedling comprises leaves and said step of distressing a shoot system comprises smothering the leaves.

78. (New) The process of claim 64 where in distressing the shoot system of the tree seedling comprises allowing sclerotia to develop for at least one growing season after distressing the shoot system.